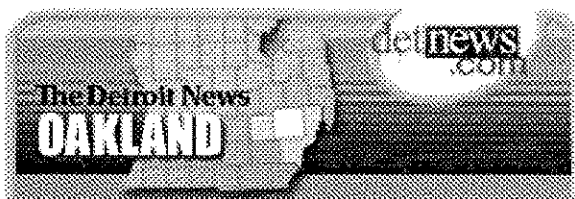


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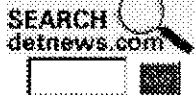


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Friday, July 2, 2004



Charles V. Tines / The Detroit News

The Road Commission for Oakland County plans to widen Crooks from Square Lake to M-59 to a four-lane boulevard to create a safer roadway and relieve traffic congestion. The project will cost \$20 million and start next April.

Crooks project to ease jams

Major road to become a 4-lane boulevard

By Jennifer Chambers / The Detroit News

TROY — When Stella Billington moved to Troy in the late 1940s, she found a nice brick home on a wooded lot along a quiet, two-lane road.

The road outside her home carried an occasional car, she recalls, perhaps churchgoers or neighbors on their way to work.

Today, nearly 30,000 cars zoom up and down Crooks Road every day where Billington lives, her home shrouded by towering pines. Traffic backs up during morning and evening rush hours, and drivers tend to push the 45 mph speed limit whenever they get the chance.

Next spring, the Road Commission for Oakland County plans to widen Crooks from Square Lake to M-59, from two lanes to a four-lane boulevard in an effort to create a safer roadway and relieve traffic congestion.

Billington, who has lived in Troy for 55 years, reluctantly agrees that it might be time for a change.

Public meeting

An informational meeting on the widening of Crooks from Square Lake to M-59 in Rochester Hills and Troy will take place from 4-7 p.m. July 15 at Troy City Hall at 500 W. Big Beaver.

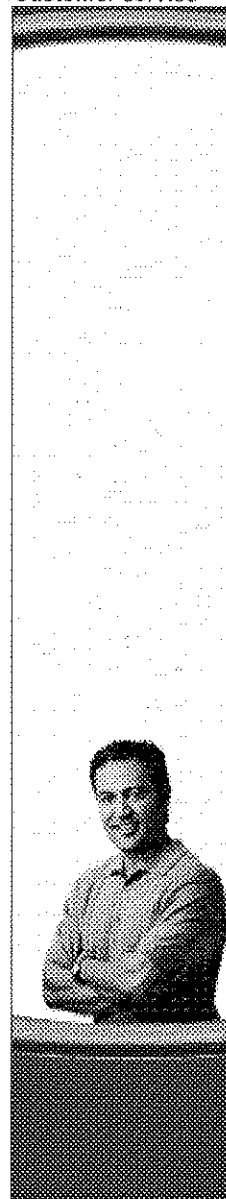
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"We have concerns because the project would ruin the beautification of our lawn, and we have beautiful pine trees out front," Billington said.

"But it is progress, and there is a lot of traffic here. It might be safer driving with the median in between the road."

The project, which will cost \$20 million, is due to begin next April. But an informational meeting will be held July 15 in Troy to provide residents of Rochester Hills and Troy and business owners with details about the changes and expected detours.

More than 70 private residences, mostly older homes on large lots, line this particular portion of Crooks, as well as 35 businesses and an elementary school.

Crooks is a major north-south route for northeast Oakland County, specifically for commuters in Troy and Rochester Hills. Both cities saw double-digit population increases from 1990 to 2000 and continue to grow.

Most of Crooks in Troy is four lanes with a median. North of Wattles Road, Crooks widens to six lanes and a median. At Square Lake Road, the road narrows to a single lane in each direction.

The result: instant traffic jam.

Craig Bryson, spokesman for the Road Commission for Oakland County, said the expansion of Crooks has been under discussion for several years as northeast Oakland County continues to grow and the roads no longer can accommodate the extra traffic.

"A substantial volume of traffic uses the road. It gets mighty congested," Bryson said.

The ultimate plan is to widen Crooks all the way up to Hamlin Road in Rochester Hills, Bryson said. But the state Department of Transportation must first rebuild the Crooks Road bridge over M-59. That project was one of 17 postponed due to state budget cuts.

The creation of a boulevard will make the roadway safer by removing the chance for collisions or accidents from turning left, he said.

"Esthetically, communities like it. It creates a park-like setting," he said.

The federal government is paying for 80 percent of the project while the road commission will front 10 percent. Troy and Rochester are responsible for the remaining 10 percent.

Rochester Hills Councilman Bryan Barnett said the expansion has been needed for some time, especially since that stretch of road is considered a connector between Interstate 75 and M-59.

"I think it's obvious there is a huge problem there. With the combination of funds coming in, you certainly don't want to pass on these dollars," Barnett said.

Many residents who live along the road remained concerned about the proximity of the road to the front of their homes. One homeowner, who has 44 feet of frontage now, will only have 19 feet when the project is done.

The reality is, the only way to widen the road is to push it out farther, Bryson said.

Jim Ford said he is apprehensive about the construction because he knows it will have an impact on his business.

Outside his shop, Barbers of the Hills, where a haircut cost \$12, he has posted a sign that reminds customers they can access the shop off Auburn Road as well as Crooks.

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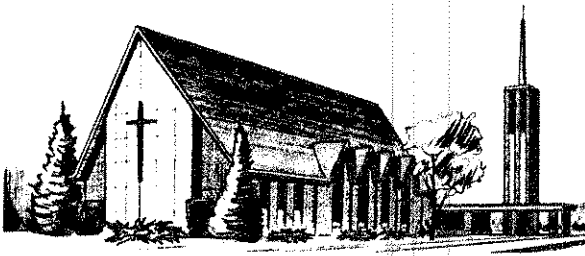
"If they close this intersection, it will close my business," Ford said.
"Overall, I am excited they are going to do something to ease traffic."

Ford questioned the wisdom of widening the road only to create another bottleneck.

"This is only going to go to a dead end, too," Ford said, pointing to traffic out his shop's front window.

You can reach Jennifer Chambers at (248) 647-7402 or jchambers@detnews.com.

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City Manager John Szerlag

The First United Methodist Church of Troy

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July 6, 2004

Padma Kuppa
EIA Board Member
City of Troy, MI

Cindy Stewart
Staff Liaison
EIA Board
City of Troy

RECEIVED

JUL 07 2004

CITY OF TROY
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

Dear Padma Kuppa and Cindy Stewart,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the possibility of religious displays in front of the Troy City Hall. While I appreciate the mission/vision statement of the Ethnic Issues Advisory Board, the United Methodist Church cannot support this idea.

The use of public property for any religious display violates our U.S. Constitution. Nothing can be done by the government that promotes the "establishment" of any religion.

My position is based on our United Methodist Social Principles and Resolution #229, "Separation of Church and State."

"The United Methodist Church has continued to affirm the position that government may not engage in, sponsor, supervise, aid, or lend its authority to religious expression or religious observance..."

United Methodism is therefore opposed to religious displays in front of the Troy City Hall.

Sincerely,

Pastor Richard A. Peacock

Copy to:
Troy City Manager
Troy City Council Members